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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Sub-Commission on the Promotion and
Protection of Human Rights
Fifty-second session
Working Group on Minorities
Sixth session
Geneva, 22-26 May 2000

ANNOTATIONS TO THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA

Note by the Secretary-General

Introduction

1. The establishment of the Working Group on Minorities was recommended by the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities in its resolution 1994/4 of 19 August 1994 and authorized by the Commission on Human Rights in its resolution 1995/24 of 3 March 1995, in which it called upon the Sub-Commission to examine, as a matter of priority, ways and means to promote and protect effectively the rights of persons belonging to minorities as set out in the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities of 18 December 1992. For that purpose it authorized the Sub-Commission to establish an inter-sessional working group. This resolution was subsequently endorsed by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1995/31 of 25 July 1995. By decision 1998/246 of 30 July 1998, the Economic and Social Council extended the mandate of the Working Group with a view to its holding one session of five working days annually.

2. The sixth session of the Working Group is scheduled to be held at the United Nations Office at Geneva from 22 to 26 May 2000.

1. Adoption of the agenda

3. The provisional agenda for the fifth session of the Working Group contained in document E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.5/2000/1 includes items on the promotion of the rights of persons belonging to minorities as set out in the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities. The Commission on Human Rights, in its resolution 1995/24, requested the Working Group to give priority consideration to the three main items contained in paragraph 9 of that resolution, namely:

(a) To review the promotion and practical realization of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities;

(b) To examine possible solutions to problems involving minorities, including the promotion of mutual understanding between and among minorities and Governments;

(c) To recommend further measures, as appropriate, for the promotion and protection of the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities.

4. In accordance with the above-mentioned paragraph, the Working Group decided to consider, at its present session, the following issues in the following order: reviewing the promotion and practical realization of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities; examining possible solutions to problems involving minorities, including the promotion of mutual understanding between and among minorities and Governments; recommending further measures, as appropriate, for the promotion and protection of the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities; the future role of the Working Group; and other matters.

5. At its fifth session, the Working Group decided to rationalize the agenda. In accordance with paragraph 106 of report E/CN.4/1999/21, the thematic issues would be as follows: the preparation of a manual on regional and global procedures and mechanisms available to minorities, multicultural and intercultural education; the media and minority issues; the prevention and resolution of conflicts involving minorities; and, the contribution of the Working Group to the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racial Intolerance.

2. Organization of work

6. It is envisaged that the number of meetings for each agenda item will be as follows: five meetings for agenda item 3 (a); two meetings for agenda item 3 (b); two meetings for agenda item 3 (c); and one meeting for agenda items 4 and 5.

3 (a) Reviewing the promotion and practical realization of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities

Commentary to the Declaration

7. In accordance with paragraph 76 of the report of the Working Group on its fifth session (E/CN 4/Sub 2/1999/21), the Working Group requested Mr Eide to submit the final draft of the Commentary to the Declaration for consideration and adoption. That document is contained in document (E/CN 4/Sub 2/AC 5/2000/WP 1)

The existence and recognition of minorities

8. In accordance with paragraph 108 (a) of the report of the Working Group on its fourth session (E/CN 4/Sub 2/1998/18), the Working Group has before it the working paper prepared by Mr Bengoa on the existence and recognition of minorities (E/CN 4/Sub 2/AC 5/2000/WP 2)

Developments at regional and international levels

9. At paragraph 106 of the report of the Working Group on its fifth session, the Working Group decided that a manual should be prepared on regional and international mechanisms and procedures for minority protection, to be discussed at its sixth session.

10. At paragraph 100 of the report of the Working Group at its fifth session, the Working Group decided to encourage the holding of regional seminars, particularly in Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean. Accordingly, a regional seminar was organized in the United Republic of Tanzania in May 2000 on issues pertaining to minorities and indigenous peoples. The report of the seminar is contained in document E/CN 4/Sub 2/AC 5/2000/WP 3

Information-gathering on minorities

11. In accordance with paragraph 95 of the report of the Working Group on its fifth session, the Working Group decided that information-gathering on minorities should be undertaken in cooperation with support organizations, including for the development of a database on minorities. The developments with regard to this activity will be considered at the sixth session.

3 (b) Examining possible solutions to problems involving minorities, including the promotion of mutual understanding between and among minorities and Governments

Multicultural and intercultural education

12. In accordance with the recommendation at paragraph 104 of the report of the Working Group on its fifth session, a seminar was organized in Montreal, Canada, on multicultural and intercultural education. The Working Group will have before it the report of the seminar (E/CN 4/Sub 2/AC 5/2000/WP 4)

Conflict prevention in situations involving minorities

13. In accordance with paragraphs 108 (a) and 99 respectively of the reports of the Working Group on its fourth and fifth sessions, the Working Group will have before it the working paper prepared by Mr. Sorabjee on conflict prevention in situations involving minorities (E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.5/2000/WP.5).

The role of the media and the protection of minorities

14. The Working Group will have before it the working paper on the seminar held on 22 and 23 May 1998 on this subject (E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.5/1998/WP.3).

The role of the specialized agencies

15. In accordance with paragraph 101 of the report of the Working Group at its fifth session and paragraph 6 of Sub-Commission resolution 1999/23, the specialized agencies, United Nations bodies, international financial institutions and regional organizations were requested to provide information to the Working group on their activities and programmes in the field of minority protection.

3 (c) Recommending further measures, as appropriate, for the promotion and protection of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities

World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance

15. In accordance with paragraph 106 of the report of the Working Group at its fifth session, the Working Group will have before it the working paper prepared by the Swiss Federal Commission against Racism on the possible contribution of the Working Group to the World Conference, with particular emphasis on the protection of minorities against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. This working paper is contained in document E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.5/2000/WP.6.

Further measures

16. It was decided that the Working Group would continue to call on observers to consider further measures for the protection of persons belonging to minorities which could act as examples or be replicated.

4. The future role of the Working Group

17. The Working Group recommended that it should, in accordance with its mandate, continue to act as a forum for dialogue and exchange of ideas, information and experiences with a view to the elaboration of proposals for constructive group accommodation and further measures to promote and protect the rights of persons belonging to minorities.

5. Other matters

18. Under this item, members of the Working Group may consider a range of issues relating to its mandate and its activities.